

Los Angeles Times: Sunday, 14 April 1957

CRASH ADDS TO RIDDLE OF U-2

By Marvin Miles, Times Aviation Editor

Ever since the Lockheed U-2 crashed in Nevada, killing Robert L. Sieker, company engineering pilot, the ship and its mission have been a systery of sorts, primarily because the Air Force called for maximum security when the plane or its wreckage was found.

Nor can we dispel the mystery, unfortunately, but we can give you both sides of the picture.

The U-2, as shown in the photo accompanying Skyways today, is a long, tubular-shaped aircraft, with a long wing and low wing loading for a jet. Somewhat remimiscent of a large sail-plane, it is powered with a J-57 engine. Length is believed to be about 65 feet and span some 70 feet. It is a single-place job and one of its unique features is its fore-and-aft landing gear, with small out-board "balancing" wheels to support the wings.

Formal Statements

Formal announcements have stated it was designed for high-altitude research - as high as 55,000 feet - into clear air turbulence, convective clouds, jet (wind) stream conditions and other meteorological phenomena.

The program in which it is being used is that of the National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics in conjunction with the USAF's Wright Air Development Center, with logistical and technical support by the AF's Air Weather Service.

It was known that several U-2s have been built and flown in various areas of the world in the meteorological study program. One crashed in Europe, killing its pilot.

All this information did not elicit too much interest in the ship until maximum security was called for in the recent crash.

-2-

Now it is reported that U-2s have been flown in Europe and out of Japan under top-security classification during the last six months, and that even when they are on the ground at U.S. air bases they are guarded day and night.

Uses Imagined

The implication cannot be misunderstood. It would seem the U-2 probably has a great many potentialities other than high-altitude meteorological studies. This was voiced in a statement attributed to an NACA authority assertedly to a German aviation magazine: "Imagine the uses of a jet airplane capable of sustained long-time flights at heights up to 65,000 feet and perhaps higher."

It's easy to guess that with such an extraordinary ceiling, plus long range, the U-2 could carry all sorts of technical equipment, including cameras, for terrain studies of difficult areas. And maybe the inspirational designation attributed to its crew, at least in one case, can give a clue to exceptional missions: Super-Snooper and St. Peter's Special.

Thus you have two versions of the U-2's mission, one official, the other by reports. Lockheed officials, understandably, cannot comment beyond the officially released material, nor can they say how many U-2s have been built. We will leave it up to you to make your own guess.

TOP SECRET

MEMORANDUM FOR: THE DIRECTOR

Herewith is an analysis of the articles considering the U-2 aircraft that appeared in the Chicago Daily Tribune and was picked up in the Los Angeles Times and in one of the Omaha papers. I hope this will be satisfactory for your purposes. Attached also are copies of the two newspaper articles.

25X1A


Richard M. Bissell, Jr.

19 April 1957
(DATE)

Attached: TS-164220, cys 1 & 2

FORM NO. 101 REPLACES FORM 10-101
1 AUG 54 WHICH MAY BE USED.

TOP SECRET